

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 00428 281036Z

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 SAB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 AF-10 DRC-01

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R 280925Z JAN 74

FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5142

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 428

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT EG

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. JANUARY 27 AKHBAR ANNOUNCES THAT SADAT HAS ORDERED RELEASE OF MUSTAPHA AMIN, IMPRISONED SINCE 1964 ON CHARGES OF ESPIONAGE. ANNOUNCEMENT OF RELEASE IS FOLLOWED BY BRIEF ARTICLES BY MUSTAPHA AMIN AND LI, HIS BROTHER. BOTH STRONGLY PRAISE SADAT.

2. JANUARY 28 PRESS CARRIES NEWS OF RELEASES OF OTHER: ABBAS RADWAN, EX-MINISTER OF INTERIOR WHO WAS ARRESTED IN 1967 IN CONNECTION WITH AMER PLOT AGAINST NASSER; GROUP CAPTAIN TASHIN ZAKI, ARRESTED IN SAME AFFAIR; EX-CHIEF OF AIR FORCE SIDQI MAHMUD AND EX-AIR VICE MARSHAL ISMAIL LABIB, TRIED IN 1968 FOR THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN 1967 DEFEAT; AND EX-WAR MINISTER MOHAMMAD FAWZI, ARRESTED IN 1971 IN CONNECTION WITH MAY 15 ANTI-SADAT MOVE BY MEMBERS OF ASU EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

3. COMMENT: MUSTAPHA AMIN'S RELEASE COMES SLIGHTLY MORE
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 00428 281036Z

THAN A WEEK AFTER THE RETURN OF HIS BROTHER ALI TO EGYPT,

AFTER AN EXILE OF NINE YEARS SUBSEQUENT TO MUSTAPHA'S ARREST. BOTH AMIN BROTHERS HAVE HAD A FOLLOWING IN EGYPT, PARTICULARLY IN PRESS CIRCLES, WHERE THEIR REPUTATION AS GUIDING FORCES OF EGYPTIAN JOURNALISM HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY UNTARNISHED. IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT, WITH INSIDE ASSISTANCE, ALI WAS ABLE TO NEGOTIATE BOTH HIS RETURN AND MUSTAPHA'S RELEASE.

4. THE OTHER RELEASES, HOWEVER, APPEAR SELECTIVE. RADWAN AND ZAKI WERE ONLY TWO MEMBERS OF A GROUP WHICH INCLUDED EX-WAR MINISTER SHAMS BADRAN AND EX-DIRECTOR OF GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SALAH NASR. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN REPRIEVES. SIDQI MAHMUD AND ISMAIL LABIB WERE ACCOMPANIED DURING THEIR TRIAL BY AIR CHIEF OF STAFF GAMAL ALITI, AND AIR VICE MARSHAL ABDEL HAMID AL-DAGHIDI, WHO WERE SUBSEQUENTLY ACQUITTED. MOHAMMAD FAWZI, RELEASED AFTER SERVING LESS THAN THREE YEARS OF A FIFTEEN-YEAR SENTENCE, WAS INVOLVED WITH INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS SHAARAWD GOMAA, SAMI SHARAF AND MOHAMMAD FAYEK IN AN ALLEGED (BY SADAT) ATTEMPT TO PRECIPITATE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS WHICH WOULD PUT THEM IN POWER. TODAY, GOMAA SHARAF, FAYEK AND OTHERS, INCLUDING ALI SABRI, REMAIN IN PRISON FOR THEIR CONNECTION WITH THIS AFFAIR. WHILE JANUARY 28 AHAM STATES THAT RELEASES HAVE BEEN MADE FOR REASON OF HEALTH, MANY EGYPTIANS WILL SEE POLITICAL MOTIVES BEHIND THEM, AND ANOTHER INDICATION THAT EGYPT'S INTERNAL PATH IS TOWARD FURTHER LIBERALIZATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMNESTY, POLITICAL PRISONERS, JOURNALISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAIRO00428
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740113/aaaaalep.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <27 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS
TAGS: PINT, EG, (AMIN, MUSTAPHA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005